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"COMMUNITY ACTION IN TENNESSEE"

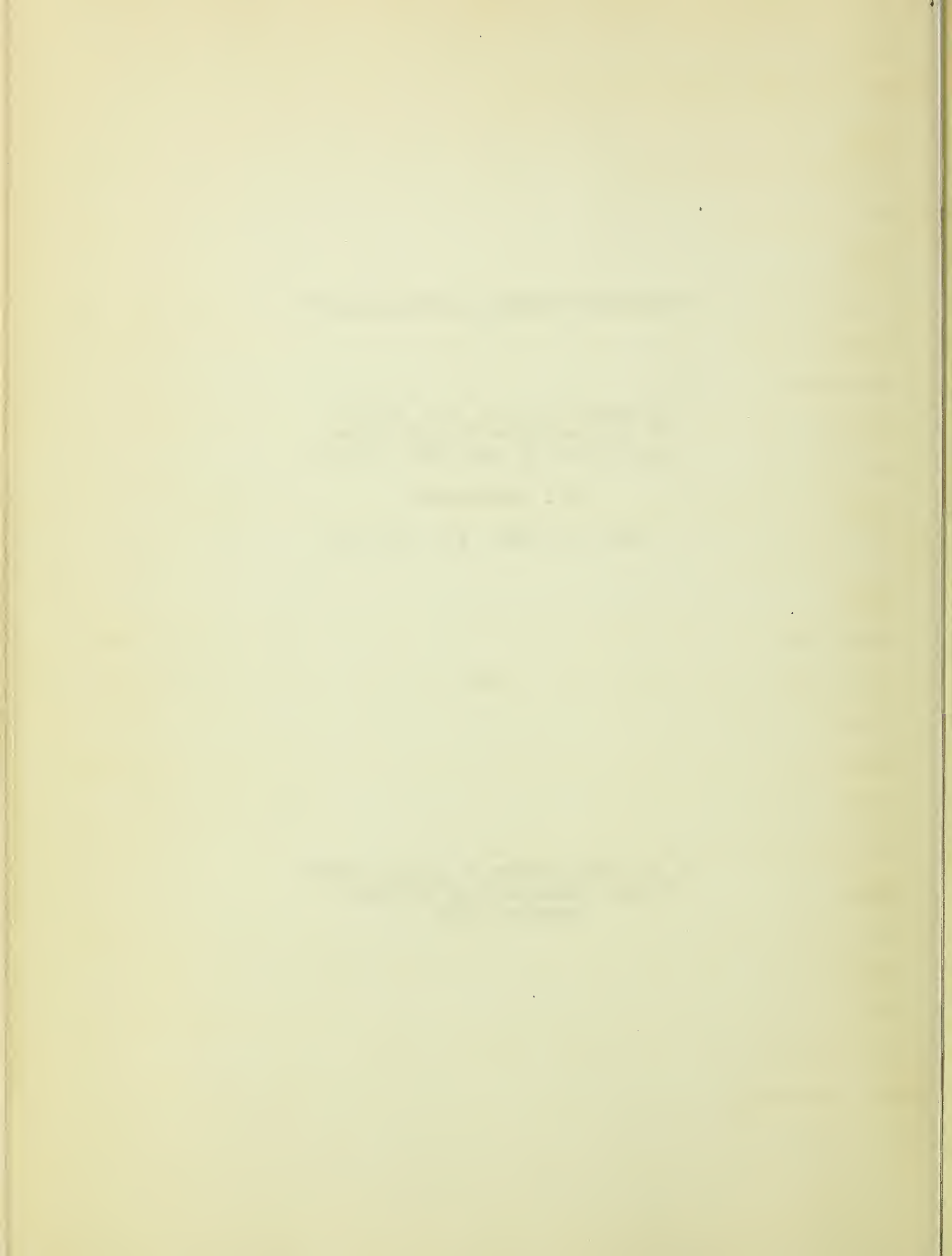
Broadcast No. 4 in a series
of discussions of soil con-
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

May 21, 1938 6 - 6:15 pm

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Dayton, Ohio



SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

RIES

Fortunes Washed Away!

MUSIC: Fading...

RIES

Deep in the hills of the Tennessee Highland Rim country, lies DeKalb county. Here, Caney Fork River moves sluggishly between overshadowing cliffs. Here, Smith Fork Creek tumbles merrily along. And here, in a county named for a Bavarian who fought for the United States during the American Revolution, is the scene of another campaign--a campaign of community action!

MUSIC: Fading...

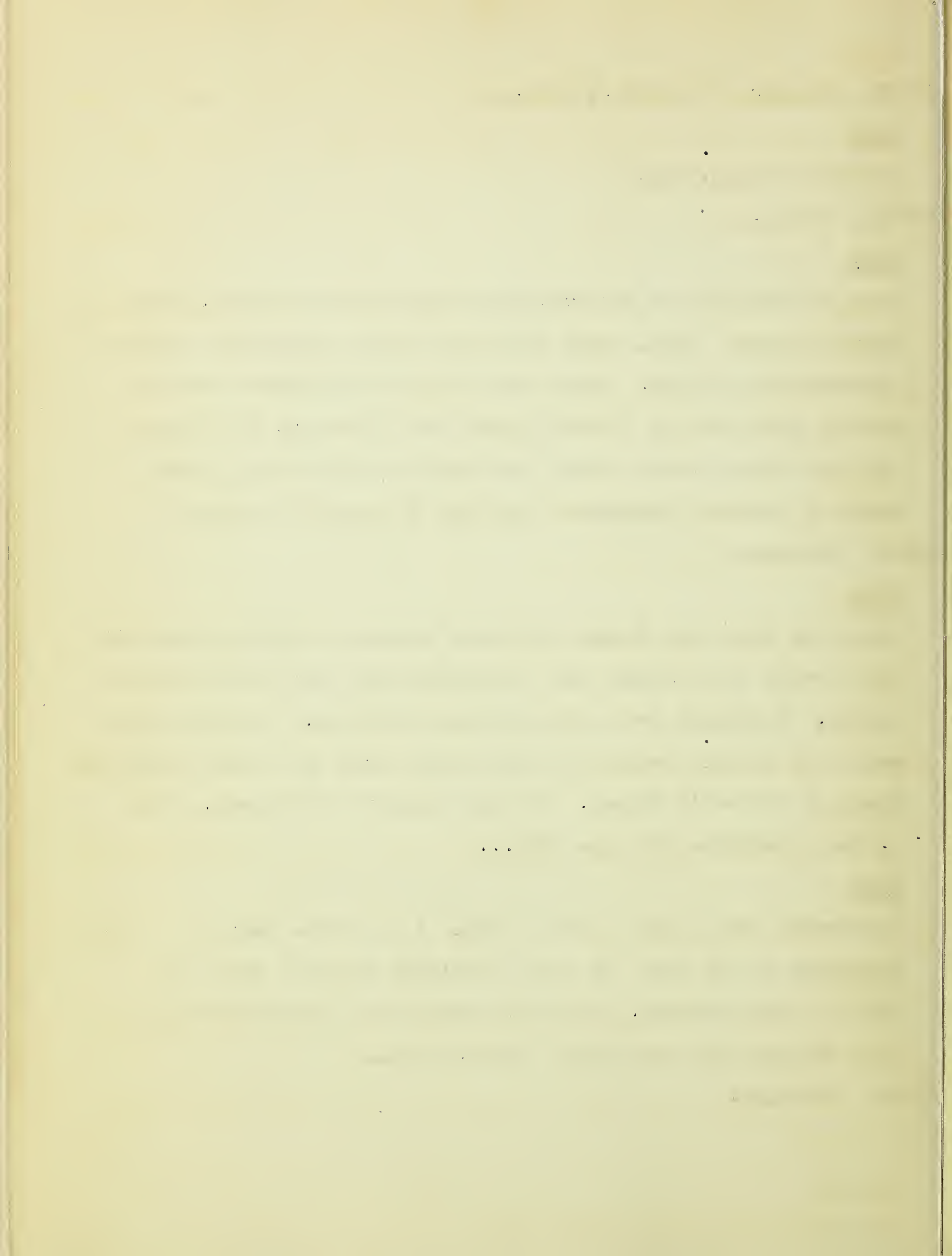
RIES

About the time that Thomas Jefferson became president, Adam Dale cut a wagon road through the canebrakes into what is now DeKalb county. A pioneer group from Maryland followed. In this hilly region of oak and cedar and tulip poplar grew up a small community known as Johnson's Chapel. It was a land of wilderness. John K. Bain remembers the time when...

BAIN

I remember when I was a lad in 1835. I ran three deer out of our cornfield in one day. My uncle Archibald killed a deer long before I can remember. Squirrels were so bad they killed the corn 30 feet from the fence. Wolves, too...

MUSIC: Fading...



RIES

No wilderness is DeKalb county today. It is a hilly, badly eroded region--gullied, fighting for a chance to make a living. Last year, in a small, unpainted schoolhouse, came the beginning of that chance. B. E. Thomas, county agricultural agent, and Jessie Maude Grills, home demonstration agent, called a meeting at Johnson's Chapel. Sixty-five attended, half of them women, most of them walking three and four miles....

SOUND: Voices of mixed crowd of 65 people.

SOUND: Rapping of fist against table.

THOMAS

All right, folks, let's get down to business.

SOUND: Voices subside slightly.

THOMAS

Jim, open that window, will you?

JIM

O. K.

SOUND: Window being raised.

THOMAS

That's better. Now, folks, you know A. B. Harmon of the Extension Service. I'm going to turn the meeting over to him.

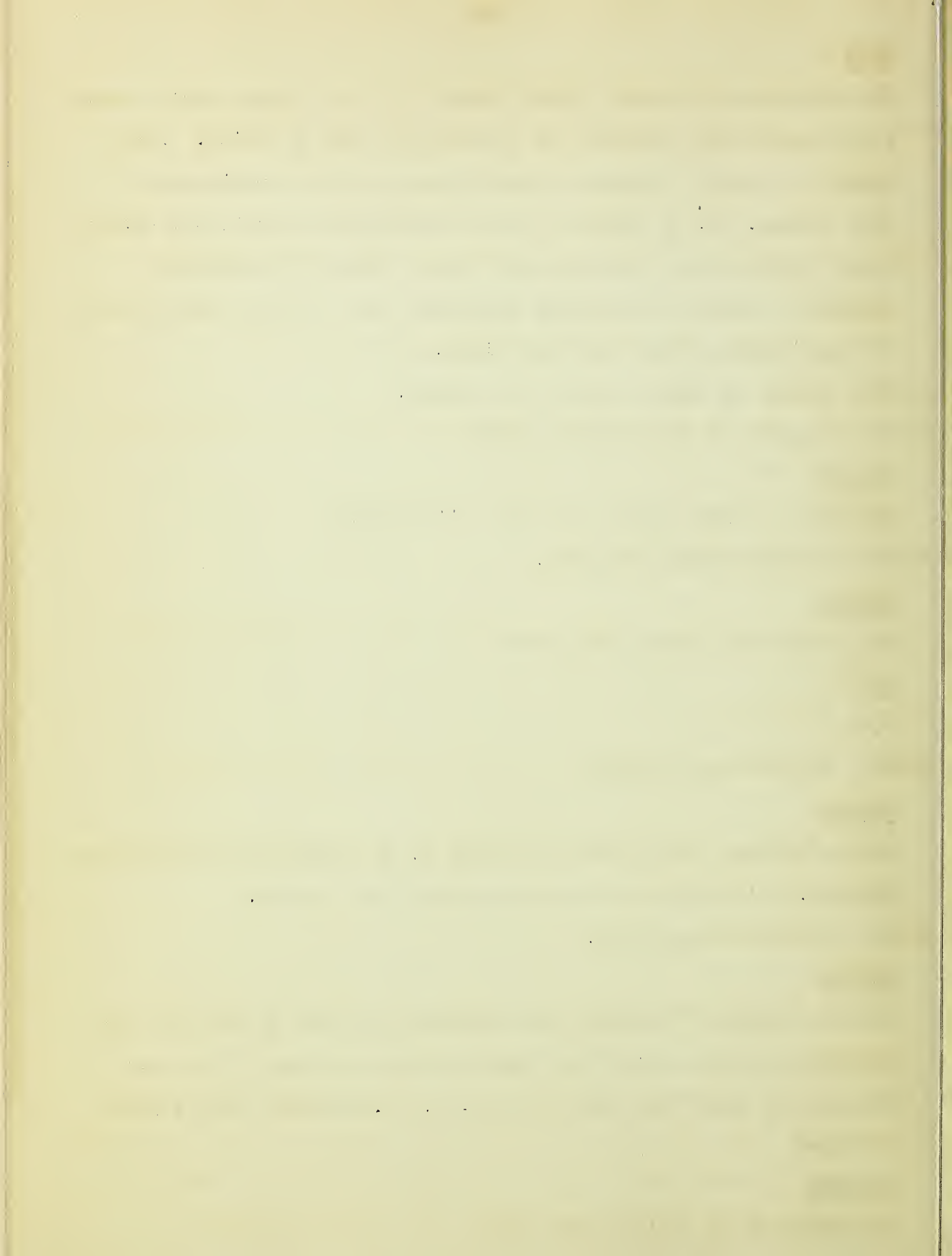
SOUND: Slight conversation.

HARMON

Thanks, Bethel. Friends, this afternoon we want to work out the community program we've been talking about so long. It's your program, so what d'ya want in it..... D. Bozarth, what's your problem?

BOZARTH

The first thing, we've gotta eat!



HARMON

What do the rest of you think about it?

SOUND: General agreement, shouts of "sure", "we need money", etc.

HARMON

All right, we'll put that down on the board.

SOUND: Scratching of chalk on blackboard while Harmon says...

HARMON

Low...income. Now, what are we going to do about it?

FARM WOMAN

I want a year-round garden! Miss Grills says the children need vegetables all during the year.

HARMON

Good for you, Mrs. Maynard.

WOMAN

And then, I'd like to know how I can make my husband hoe that garden.

SOUND: Laughter...

SOUND: Scratching of chalk on blackboard while Harmon says...

HARMON

Year 'round...garden...fresh vegetables and canned stuff...And how about chickens...

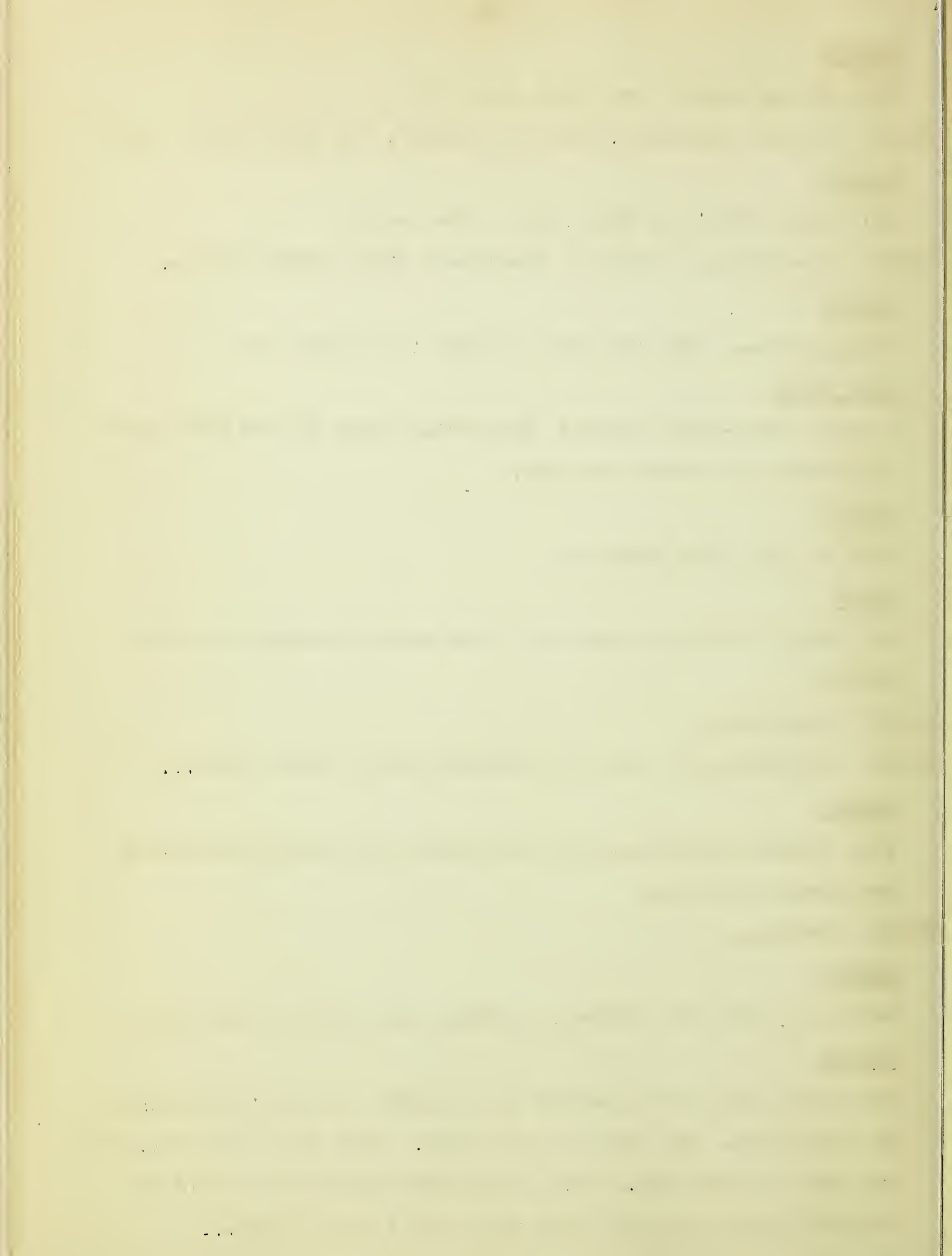
MUSIC: Fading...

HARMON

We've got this much settled. Bethel, read it off, will you?

THOMAS

Here's the goal we've decided on for 1938: A year 'round garden on every farm. Two cows on every farm. From 30 to 100 hens, and one sow on every farm. Five of you have promised to build new brooder houses, and I'm going to do all I can to help...



HARMON

That'll take care of the live-at-home part. Now, what's the next problem?

FARMER

Mr. Harmon, we can't do anything until something's done about them gullies.

HARMON

All right, we'll put that down.

SOUND: Scratching of chalk on blackboard while Harmon says...

HARMON

Erosion. What are we going to do about it?

THOMAS

First, we've got to build check dams, and get some vegetation on these gullies.

FARMER

Let's start at my place!

SOUND: Several voices saying "How about mine?", "I don't know what to do", etc.

HARMON

All right, George, suppose we have a check dam demonstration at your farm...

MUSIC: Fading...

RIES

In a few weeks, 18 farmers gathered at the farm of George Elrod to see how check dams may be built out of material gathered on the farm. Under the supervision of County Agent Thomas and G. S. Hollingsworth, extension soil conservationist from the University of Tennessee, each man contributed his bit...

SOUND: Voices, and sound of rocks (lump size) being tossed into gully on top of each other.

THOMAS

A little more over there, Toy. Hey, Mooneyham, not so high in the center. It ought to be about 18 inches high there, and the center should be the lowest part of the dam. There--that's right. That'll keep it from cutting around. Now we can put in some grass and cedar brush to make it silt up...

LUNA

Say! I live just across the road. Let's put some dams in over there while we're going good.

THOMAS

Sure, Charlie! Now we're getting some place.

MUSIC: Fading...

RIES

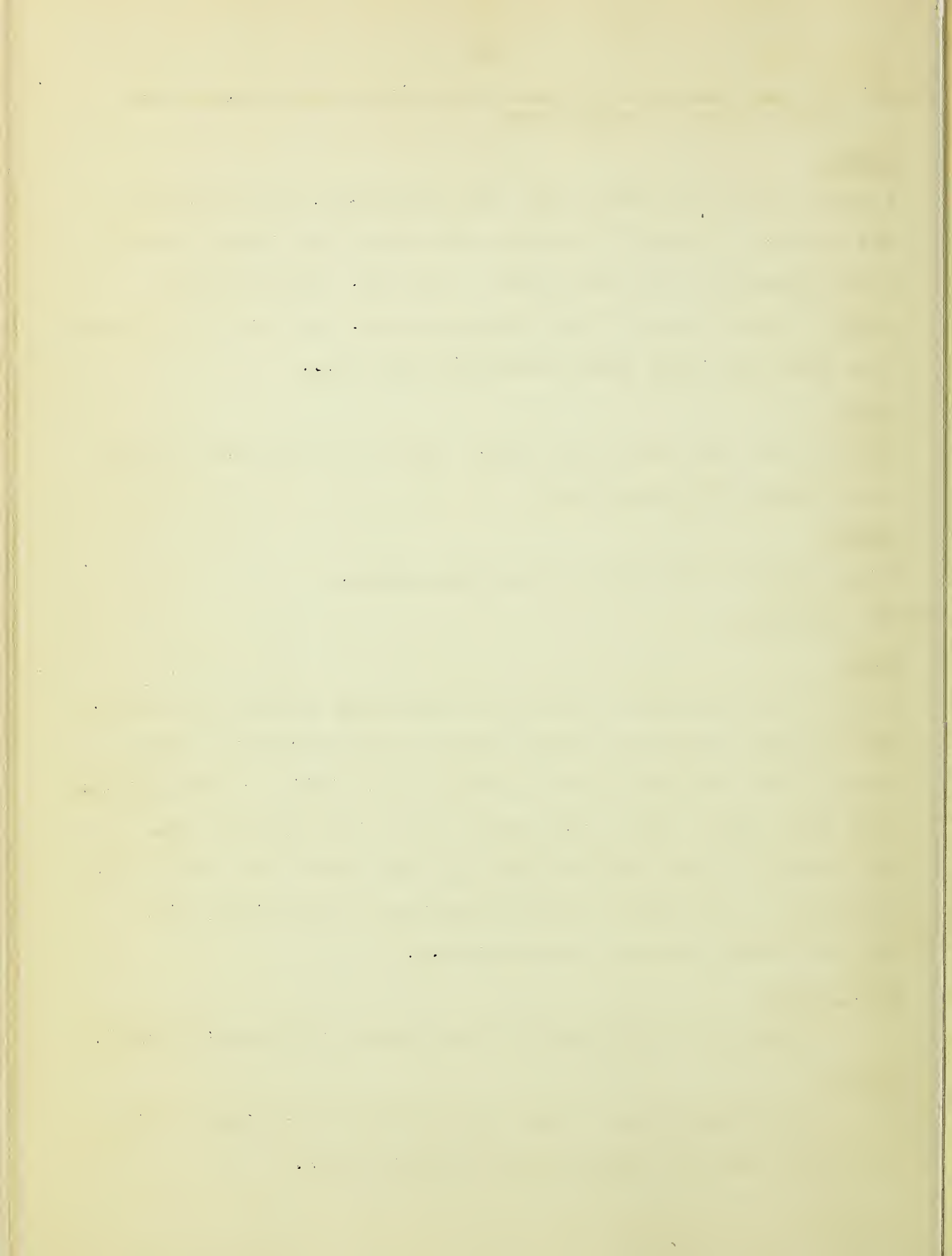
Indeed, the community of Johnson's Chapel was getting some place. Charlie Luna planted an eroded field to black locust, on the contour. He terraced another eroded field, filling in the gullies with check dams. And to the women, led by the vigorous home demonstration agent, Miss Grills, goes the credit for much of the progress. In the quiet little courthouse at Smithville, Miss Grills recently told the county agent...

MISS GRILLS

Mist' Thomas, I'm awful proud of those women at Johnson's Chapel.

THOMAS

Yes, I don't blame you. I see they won that prize given by the Smithville bank for underpinning the most houses.



MISS GRILLS

Yessuh, practically every house in the community has been under-pinned, to keep them warmer in the winter and to make them look better. They're going to buy two steam pressure canners with that prize. They've painted and lettered their names on every mailbox. And you know that those women have made nearly a thousand pounds of yellow cheese, at a cost of less than one cent a pound, in the 2 years since I gave that first demonstration in cheese making.

THOMAS

I'll never forget the time they walked through several miles of snow to attend that last meeting. But the men have done a lot, too, Miss Grills.

MISS GRILLS

Erosion control demonstration farms like those at Elrods, Bozarth's, and Mooneyhams ought to be a lot of help.

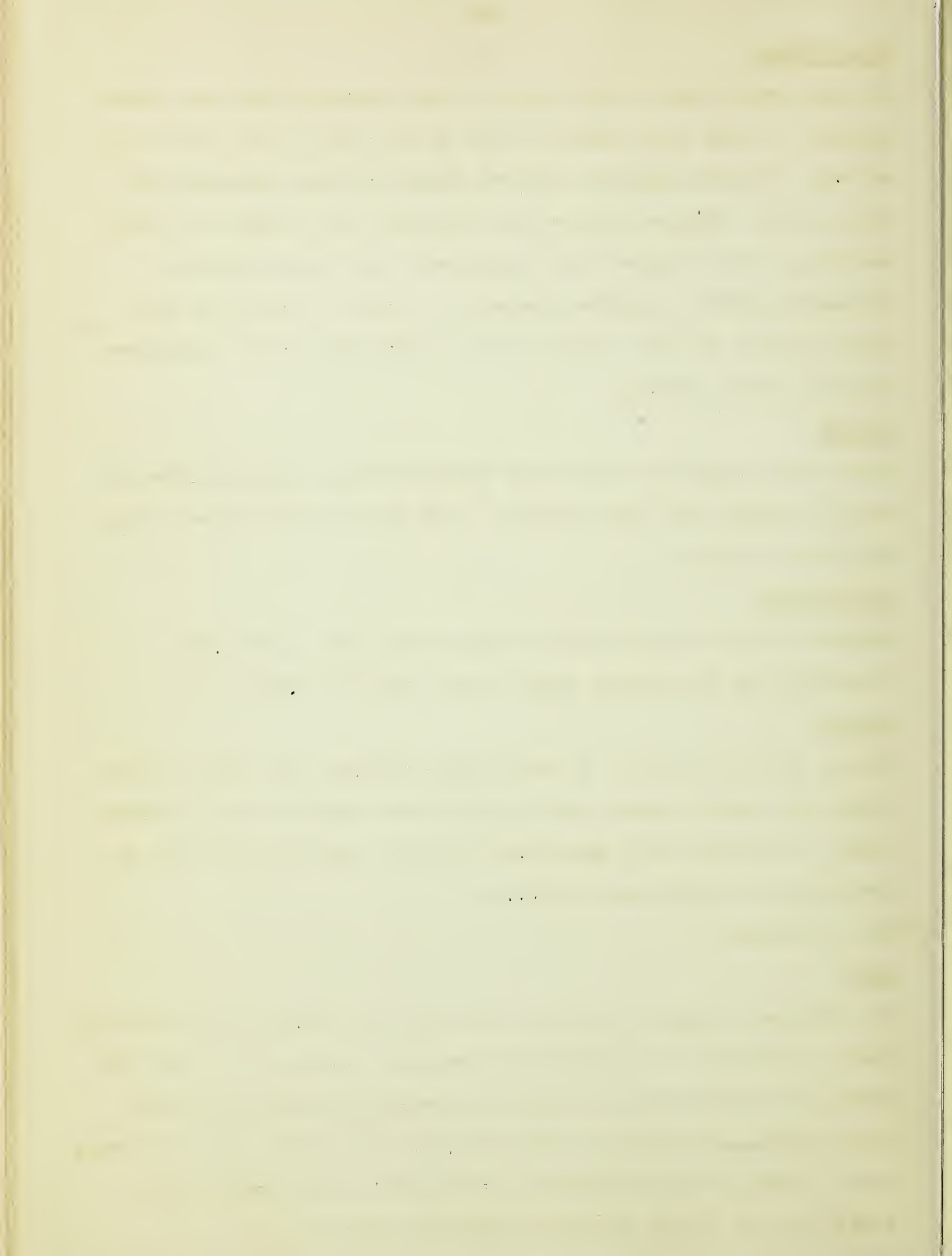
THOMAS

That's just the start. We need gully control. We need to turn under more green manure, and to grow some legumes at all times. Ought to terrace where practical. And we ought to cut down on row crops and raise more cattle...

MUSIC: Fading...

RIES

And Johnson's Chapel is going ahead with its goals. The community plans a membership of 75 4-H club boys and girls, to terrace 100 acres, to use 200 tons of lime, to devote 500 acres to winter cover crops...in short, to show itself, the county, and the world, that a hilly, rugged community can win the fight against poor soils and low income through--community action!



MUSIC: Fading...

RIES

And now, here's Ewing Jones, your regular weekly spokesman from the Soil Conservation Service office at Dayton. Ewing, I'd say the farmers at Johnson's Chapel had the right idea. Through community action they were able to accomplish a lot they couldn't have done by working alone.

JONES

There's no doubt about it, Joe Ries. Cooperative community work is a highly important part of meeting the soil erosion problem. As a matter of fact, the Soil Conservation Service is now planning to spend more and more time cooperating with farmers who have organized for soil conservation work.

RIES

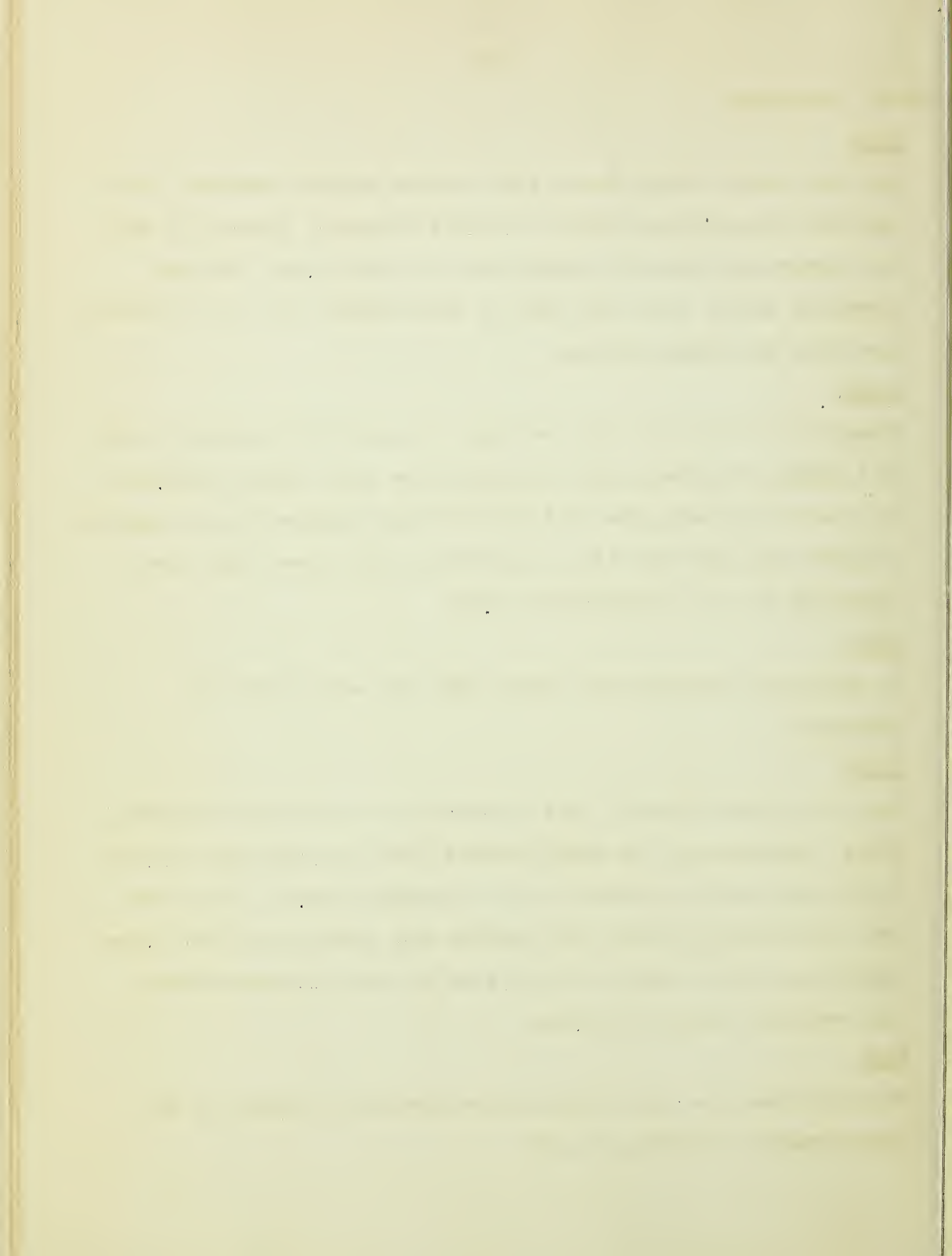
In different words you are saying that "in union there is strength".

JONES

Yes, Joe, that's true in soil conservation as in most other big jobs. Farmers--and the Service--have found the best way to work on the soil erosion problem is on a community basis. So, from now on, whenever farmers get together and organize for soil conservation, we're going to do our best to help them--providing they want our help, of course.

RIES

You don't mean the Soil Conservation Service is giving up the demonstration projects, do you?



JONES

Absolutely not. The demonstration projects are still the first line of defense against erosion. Cooperation with organized farmers is the second step. Just to clear up the picture, let's review what's happened in soil conservation during the past five years. A summary of soil conservation progress, so to speak.

RIES

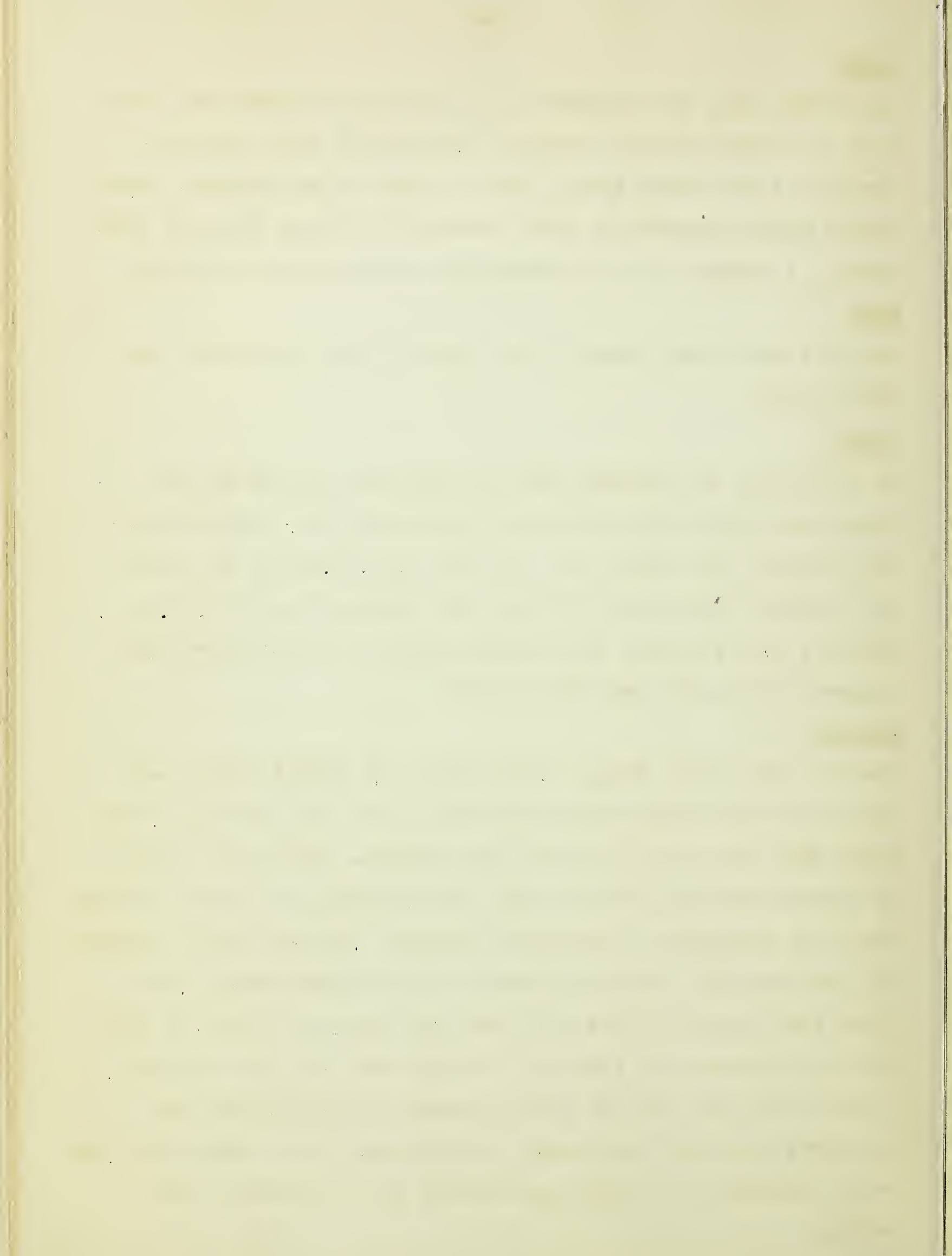
That's a good idea, Ewing, if you can do it in the little time that's left.

JONES

We can do it, Joe, because here in the studio is the man who knows more about soil erosion and more about soil conservation than anyone I can think of. He's Dr. H. H. Bennett, the Chief of the Soil Conservation Service, from Washington, D. C. Dr. Bennett, will you give us the high points of soil conservation progress during the past five years?

BENNETT

That's a big order, Ewing. Since 1933, the United States has done more soil conservation work than in all its history. If we begin with that year, we start from scratch. That year little or nothing was being done to stop soil erosion. At least, nothing that even resembled a nationwide program. For more than a century, the precious soil of the country had been washing away. Year after year, more and more soil left the farms and found its way into the rivers--into the Gulf of Mexico and into the oceans. I don't know why, but few people seemed to realize that the country's most basic asset--the topsoil--was being destroyed. And being destroyed at a rate unparalleled in the history of the world.



JONES

That's the situation as it existed up to 1933.

BENNETT

Briefly, yes. It wasn't until the spring of 1934 that a program aimed at soil erosion control on a nationwide basis really got under way. That was when we began to set up the first demonstration projects.

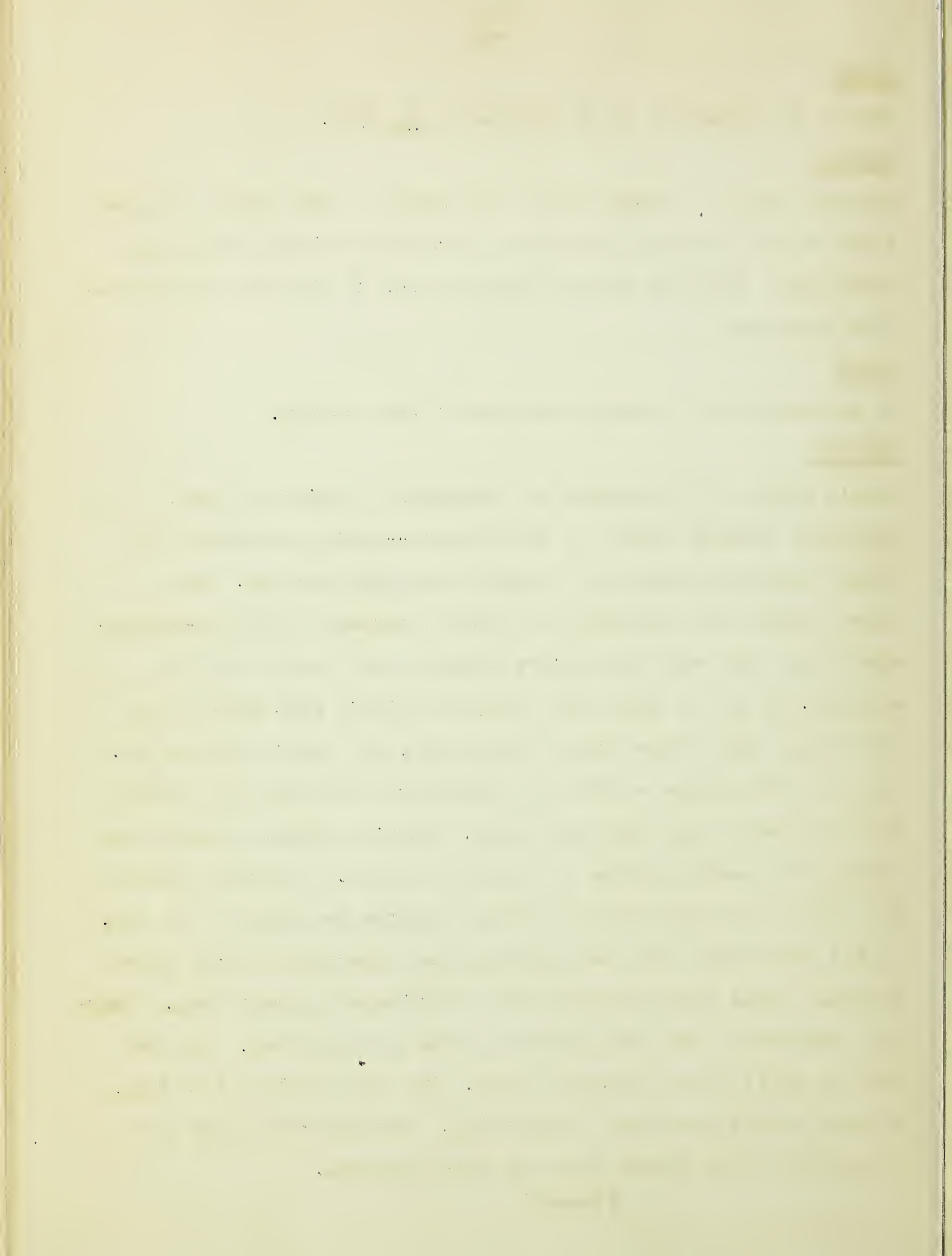
JONES

In representative farming sections of the country.

BENNETT

That's right. We attempted to establish a project in each important farming region of the country--giving preference to those localities where soil erosion was most serious. The object behind the projects, of course, was--and still is--demonstration. All over the country farmers were losing soil by erosion. A lot of them knew this, but didn't know what to do about it. Many others were losing soil, but didn't realize it. So, for both groups we felt the demonstrations would be a help. And I'm glad to say they have been. They've helped a great many farmers who needed advice on erosion control. And many farmers who didn't know they had an erosion problem are aware of it now. In all this work, the State agricultural specialists have cooperated. Local organizations have contributed a great deal. Working together in this way, much has been accomplished. And the work is still going straight ahead. But the problem is so big, we have really just made a beginning. Each year the need for conservation has become more and more apparent.

(more)



For example, the problem in the Great Plains is now more acute. Erosion has been accentuated by drought. With low rainfall, crops wither; the soil dries up and becomes powder. At that stage, it doesn't take much wind to blow it away. So, beginning in 1935, drought became a consideration of the conservation program. Of course, nothing anybody can do will actually prevent a drought. The weather simply can't be controlled. But we are confident that extensive use of soil and water conservation measures will go a long way toward reducing the effects of drought.

JONES

Going from one extreme to another, Dr. Bennett, isn't it true that conservation measures are also effective in unusually wet weather?

BENNETT

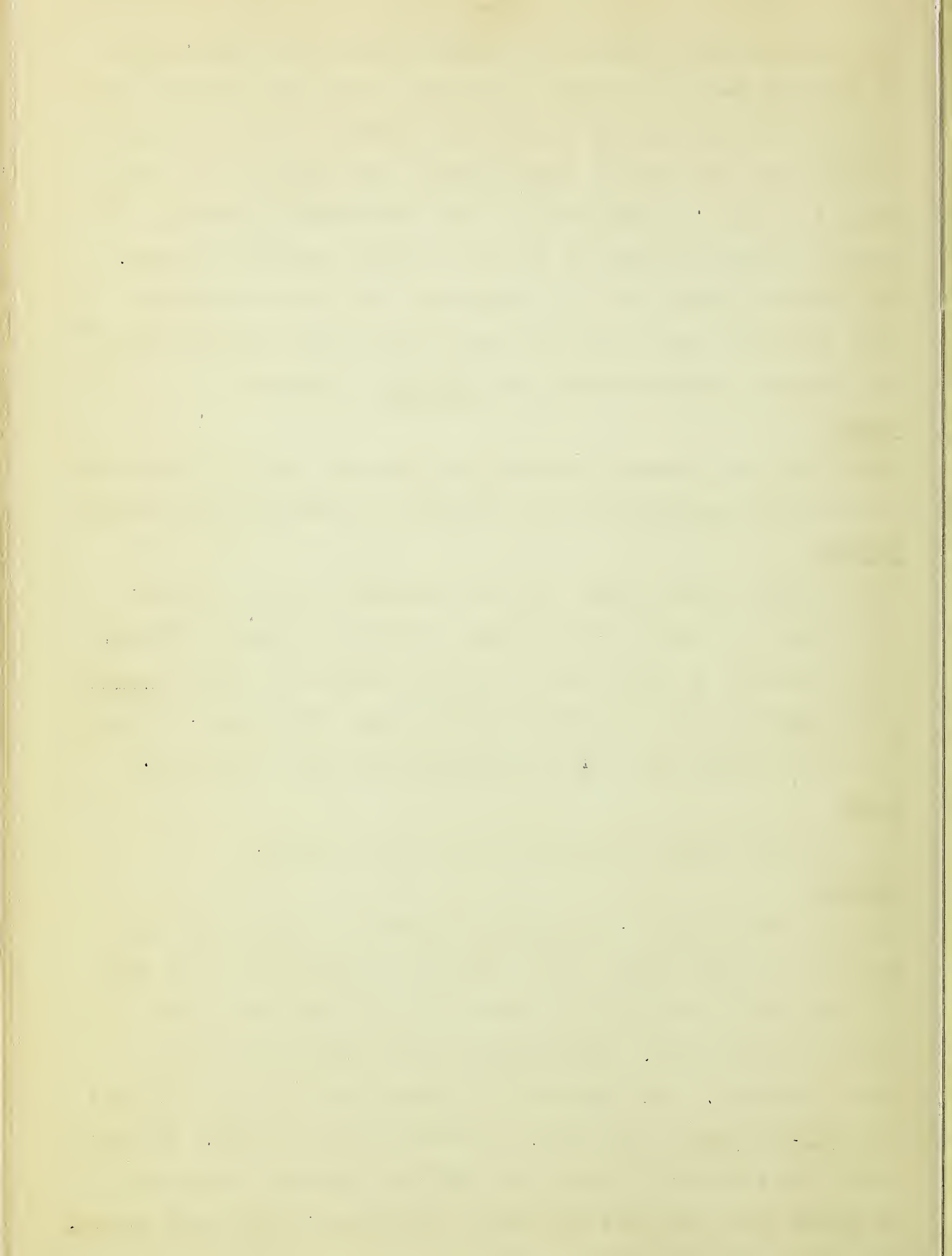
That's quite right, Ewing. In dry sections, we try to hold as much water as possible on the land. In the more humid sections, where rainfall is plentiful, we have the problem of moving excess water off the land and moving it off safely. That means carrying the water slowly, and without losing any soil in the process.

JONES

And that also means a reduction in the flood hazard.

BENNETT

Correct. The soil is the greatest reservoir we have, with the exception of the oceans. So it stands to reason that every drop of water held in the soil is a drop of water kept out of the rivers in flood time. Floods start on the land, not in the stream channels. And conservation measures on the land will hold back all--or much of the rain, and store it in the soil. At very least, the movement of water from the land into the rivers will be slowed down, and that will mean a reduction in the flood hazard.



JONES

Briefly, then, progress in soil conservation includes demonstration projects that have shown the way to control of water erosion and dust storms. It also includes work to alleviate drought conditions, and work to reduce the flood hazard.

BENNETT

You've mentioned some of the high spots. There are many more. And one of the most important is progress in the field of research. As rapidly as possible we are building up a storehouse of fundamental information on the erosion problem. By experimentation we are learning which methods of control are most effective under a given set of conditions, and which methods are not effective. We have learned much about the influence of climate, and about the silting of rivers and reservoirs. On a great many questions we can speak with assurance today, where formerly there was confusion and doubt. And throughout the country, on more than 500 demonstration projects, this information is being made available to farmers. All this work has had an effect. During the past five years many people have changed their attitude toward the land. Soil conservation is becoming familiar, not only as a word, but as an action. The time has come to broaden the scope of the national program. Demonstration projects are not enough. Assistance by State and Federal agencies to individual farmers is not enough. If we are to deal adequately with the problem, the erodible land of every watershed must be brought under some kind of control. That means community action--action similar to that taken by the farmers of Johnson's Chapel.

(more)

I am convinced we will not have an effective control of soil erosion until farmers have banded together in a common cause. The movement has just started, but farmers already have organized 39 soil conservation districts, covering more than 19 million acres, in 11 states. Eleven more states have passed laws permitting farmers to organize these districts. And because of the community action encouraged by the district approach, we can now look for increased soil conservation progress in these states. Only by working together can we hope to control erosion effectively, and preserve the soil--for ourselves--and for generations to come.

MUSIC: Fading...

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain, fading too...

ANNOUNCER

Next week, the story of the Muskingum Conservancy District...

SOUND: Up on thunder and rain...

ANNOUNCER

This is an educational presentation of the Nation's Station.

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